GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CIA/RR GM 62-9
November 1962

THE DISPUTED FRONTIERS OF KASHMĪR

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

SECRET

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FOREWORD

This edition of the Geographic Intelligence Memorandum, GM 62-9, The Disputed Frontiers of Kashmir, is disseminated in advance of the final publication. The final version of the memorandum, which is being prepared for reproduction, will contain maps and, like other publications in this series, will appear as a single folded sheet that is convenient for briefing and reference.

THE DISPUTED FRONTIERS OF KASHMIR

Introduction

The possibility of a settlement of the longstanding dispute about Kashmir as a whole has been made less likely since 1959 by the dispute between Communist China and India about their common border in the Ladakh area of northeastern Kashmir and, more recently, by the announcement that Pakistan and Communist China would enter into negotiations about their common boundary. In Ladakh the spring and summer of 1962 were marked by a series of border incidents accompanied by an exchange of acrimonious notes between India and China. Both countries engaged in aggressive patrolling, and numerous new border posts were established. On 20 October 1962, however, heavy fighting broke out in the Northeast Frontier Agency,* and simultaneously the Chinese troops attacked in strength in Ladakh.

The frontier areas of Kashmir that are in dispute would not seem to possess qualities likely to arouse national passions about ownership. The areas include a total of about 14,000 square miles of high, barren terrain that is largely inaccessible and singularly devoid of human habitation as well as, apparently, economic wealth. Nevertheless, these areas have strategic value as buffer zones. National pride also is involved in the disputes because of a long history of past claims. The bitterness engendered about the Sino-Indian section of the Kashmir

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frontier has so hardened attitudes on both sides that even before the major Chinese offensive late in October neither side appeared willing to settle the quarrel except on its own terms. Although a mutually satisfactory settlement between China and India seems unlikely, a boundary settlement between China and Pakistan is conceivable because the territory in dispute is relatively small and because both countries have announced their intention to reach an accord.

The Ladakh Dispute

Physical Characteristics of the Ladakh Area: More than one-half of the disputed part of Ladakh is physiographically a westward extension of the Tibetan Plateau and is characterized by a number of very high basins (16,000 to 18,000 feet in elevation) -- the Lingzhithāng, Aksai Chin, Mangrik, and several minor ones. Salt flats commonly are found in the centers of these nearly lifeless high basins whose level surfaces are occasionally interrupted by low, undulating hills. Somewhat higher ridges and mountains with peaks of 20,000 to 21,000 feet separate the individual basins. To the north, where the northward-flowing Qara Qāsh River and its tributaries have cut back into the plateau, the terrain is more dissected. The western part of the disputed territory extends west from the water divide between the tributaries of the Shyok River and (1) the headwater tributaries of the Qara Qāsh River, which flows north, and (2) streams of the plateau, which flow east toward interior drainage basins. The terrain of this western section generally is more rugged and more compartmentalized than that in the east; many of the smaller

streams flow in narrow V-shaped valleys, and elevations of the valleys are somewhat lower than those of the plateau. Most of the terrain of the disputed territory to the south, in the vicinity of Pangong and Spanggur Lakes and along the Indus Valley, is similar to that of the disputed western part described above.

In general, areas of Ladakh that are controlled by India have mostly rough, dissected, mountainous terrain that hinders movement and makes the construction and maintenance of lines of communications costly and difficult. In contrast, the Chinese-occupied part of Ladakh also is generally very high but consists of relatively open plateau and basin country in which roads can be constructed and maintained much more easily.

The severe climate limits military operations in Ladakh. Subfreezing temperatures occur throughout the year in most areas, and readings during winter may drop to -30°F or lower. Very strong winds are common, characteristically occurring in the afternoon; consequently, airdrops normally are made in the morning to avoid the winds and the usual buildup of clouds over the mountains during the warmer part of the day. Although stormy days are frequent throughout the year, the total annual precipitation is low because the high mountains to the south block the moisture-laden air of the summer monsoon. Snow accumulation is seldom a barrier to movement in most of the disputed area -- even the very high Karakoram Pass (18,290 feet in elevation) is seldom if ever blocked by snow -- but passes to the south, such as those over the Ladakh Range north of Leh, commonly are blocked from November until June. Although climatic conditions vary locally,

most of Indian-controlled Ladakh receives more precipitation than the high plains of Chinese-controlled Ladakh. Consequently, India faces greater logistical problems than does China in supplying the frontier forces.

Transportation: As early as 1957 the Chinese Communists completed a road from Sinkiang through the Aksai Chin Basin to western Tibet. From this road, the Chinese have constructed numerous feeder roads, including one in the west that roughly parallels the main road and permits the movement of troops and supplies to Chinese outposts in the headwater areas of the Chip Chap and Galwan Rivers. Other feeder roads probably have been built in addition to those shown on the accompanying map. In many places the level basins and broad valleys provide natural roadbeds that require little construction or maintenance to be made usable for motor vehicles. Although the Sinkiang-Tibet road is open only 8 months of the year, apparently it has been possible to supply the few thousand troops in western Tibet and the border areas via this route. In addition to the Sinkiang-Tibet road, a road across southern Tibet from the major Chinese bases at Lhasa and Zhikatse that was completed recently also provides logistical support to the Chinese forces in western Tibet. The possible existence of airfields in western Tibet has not been confirmed, but the area probably does have temporary landing strips from which airdrop missions could be carried out.

In contrast to the relatively good roads of the Chinese-controlled area, the main road from Srinagar -- the major Indian base in Kashmir -- twists tortuously across both the Great Himalaya and the Zāskār Ranges to Leh, the capital of Ladakh and the advance military base for border operations. The road to Leh was completed in 1960. According to recent reports, however, the Indians completed in October 1962 an extension that runs northeast to Shyok and from there south to Chushul. Nevertheless, pack animals still must be used to move supplies to most of the Indian border posts. Because of the formidable terrain and severe climate, India has relied heavily on air supply to support her frontier operations. Supplies are flown to the Leh airfield, which can accommodate C-119's, and to an airfield at Chushul, which can take C-47's. From these fields, planes and helicopters are dispatched on airdrop missions in the border area.

Chinese Cartographic Claims: To India, one of the most irritating and confusing aspects of the Ladakh dispute has been the differing cartographic claims of the Chinese. Two border claims have been depicted on Chinese Communist maps. The earlier claim, which appeared on most Chinese maps published through 1956, was depicted by a boundary to the west along the water divide between the Shyok and Qara Qāsh Rivers. India calls this boundary the 1956 line. The later claim, extending the boundary still farther westward, has been shown on Chinese Communist maps published after 1956. India refers to this boundary as the 1960 line. The 1960 line was given official Chinese

sanction when it was shown on the map that the Chinese presented during border talks with the Indians in 1960. The 1960 version of the border was not entirely new, however, inasmuch as it had been shown as early as 1951 on a Chinese Communist map of Tibet. The difference between the two lines is often cited in Indian complaints to China on the border issue. In particular, India refers to a statement by Chou En-lai in 1959 in which he said that the 1956 maps showed the boundary correctly. The Chinese respond by saying that the 1956 and 1960 maps are more or less the same. Although India is justifiably angered by the differing Chinese cartographic claims and the equivocal Chinese statements about them, India itself is not entirely immune to a similar charge of inconsistency. Before 1954, maps produced by India showed various portrayals of the Ladakh boundary. Until that time, apparently, Indian officials had not decided on the precise location of the boundary that has been shown on maps since then and has been described in official Indian documents.

Border Developments in 1962: Between 1959 and 1962, the Chinese slowly enlarged the territory under their control by setting up new outposts and extending roads to supply these posts. This continuing advance beyond the 1956 line and toward the 1960 line posed a potential threat to Indian communications in the Shyok Valley, including access to the Karakoram Pass. Apparently, the Government of India decided early in 1962 to use military means to try to force the withdrawal of Chinese Communist forces from their advanced positions in the Ladakh border area. Indian planning included the dispatch of strengthened patrols into the border area to establish new Indian posts in territory not under Chinese occupation and, in some areas, to outflank and isolate existing Chinese posts in an effort to force the withdrawal of the Chinese. Although the Indians were handicapped by the lack of motorable roads to the frontier, India had sufficient airlift capacity -- augmented by traditional pack-animal transport -- to support logistically the relatively small number of troops that were to be used. Probably the maximum military objective was to make the Chinese retreat to the 1956 line. The Indians may have thought that even if they failed in their main objective, these military actions would halt new Chinese advances and would serve notice to the government in Peking that India was determined not to yield on its Ladakh claims.

The first Chinese reaction to the more aggressive Indian military policy was stated in a Chinese note of April 1962, which charged the

Indians with armed reconnaissance and "provocative air-droppings" near a Chinese post in the Chip Chap Valley. This post, located about 10 miles east of the 1960 line, might have been the springboard for further Chinese advances westward in the summer of 1962. During the spring and summer, however, the Indians managed to establish in a rough semicircle a number of posts that effectively blocked Chinese movement along the Chip Chap and its tributaries. Also in 1962, incidents occurred in the Galwan River Valley, where the compartmentalized nature of the terrain restricts lines of communications to the valley floors. In July the Chinese vehemently protested the establishment of an Indian post to the rear (upstream) of a Chinese post in the lower Galwan Valley. The Indian post blocked the only land route between the Chinese supply base reportedly located at Samzungling, to the east, and the frontier area. Additional Chinese forces that were sent to the frontier then severed Indian land communications, presumably through the Kugrang Valley to the south, and thus forced the Indians to supply their forces by airdrop. Nevertheless, the presence of the Indian post or posts deterred temporarily any further Chinese movement down the Galwan Valley.

Indian military operations also have been directed toward a third sector of the frontier -- the Pangong and Spanggur Lake area. Indian activities here have included the establishment of (1) a post east of the Marsimik Pass and west of Chinese posts at Nyagzu and Dambu Guru in order to protect an important route to the Chang Chenmo Valley; (2) posts on

both the north and south shores of Pangong, at Sirijap and Yula, respectively, which were intended to prevent the westward movement of Chinese forces along the lake; and (3) a post on high ground that overlooks the Indus Valley and the Chinese posts on the southern and western shores of Spanggur Lake. These Chinese posts, as recent reports of attacks from them testify, threaten the Indian base and airfield at Chushul as well as the overland supply route to Indian troops in the Indus Valley near Demchhog.

By midsummer 1962, Indian forces had advanced about as far as they could go without forcibly dislodging the Chinese from existing Chinese posts. Although a few shooting incidents occurred during this period, most of the military maneuvers were shadow-boxing episodes that involved only a few dozen to a few hundred troops. The Chinese countered Indian moves by strengthening their existing posts and by establishing new positions, many of them in support of older outposts. For a while the military situation was stabilized, but it changed abruptly when the Chinese began new attacks late in October. These recent attacks have resulted in the loss or abandonment of most of the newly established Indian posts, and the Chinese seem to intend to control, at the least, all territory up to the boundary that they claimed in 1960.

A renewal of correspondence between India and China about possible ways to settle the border dispute was initiated by India late in July 1962. Basic proposals dating back to 1959 that were considered essential

to negotiations were restated by both countries. The Chinese plan called for the withdrawal of the armed forces of each nation for a distance of 20 kilometers from the line where each exercised control. India's basic position was that Indian forces would remain west of the 1956 line and that Chinese personnel must withdraw east of the border according to the official Indian version. Since then, several notes that have been exchanged between the two countries have included slight modifications, preconditions, and other diplomatic maneuvers -- without any apparent willingness on the part of either side to accept the proposals of the other. Furthermore, the recent outbreak of fighting in the Northeast Frontier Agency has added complicating factors and has made unlikely any negotiations devoted solely to the Ladakh sector.

The Sino-Pakistani Border Problem

The frontier between Communist China and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir,* encompasses rugged mountains and the high valleys of the upper Yarkand River. Most of this frontier lies along the massive peaks and glaciers of the Karakoram Range, a terrain barrier so high and broad that for some 150 miles west of the Karakoram Pass there is no north-south route that is used regularly. In the somewhat lower mountains that form the Sino-Pakistani border in the Hunza area, however, several routes and high passes permit

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limited access to Sinkiang from Kashmir. Even here, transport facilities are poor and perilous, and the 65-mile jeep road from Gilgit to Hunza is one of the most dangerous in the world.

In contrast to the extensive border differences in Ladakh, areas that may be disputed between Pakistan and Communist China are relatively small. The Chinese Communist version of the border, as portrayed on the map presented at the 1960 Sino-Indian border talks, follows the main crest of the Karakoram Range west to the Shimshāl Pass and then cuts northwestward without obvious reference to terrain features to the Mintaka Pass, incorporating northeast Hunza within Sinkiang. In the absence of a definitive Pakistani statement, the maximum area that may be claimed by Pakistan is assumed to be that shown on the accompanying map. This claim is portrayed by a boundary along the northern slopes of the Karakoram Range, paralleling the Chinese version by some 5 to 15 miles to the north; and in the Hunza area, a boundary incorporating Darband within Pakistan and following the water divide along the line of the principal passes to the north and west. Although China has refused to discuss with India the border west of the Karakoram Pass, Indian claims in this western area are similar to those of Pakistan -- except that north of Darband the border claimed by India diverges from the Pakistani line and follows the Aghil Range, north of the upper Shaksgam Valley. The major problem is the area east of the Shimshāl Pass. Traditionally, Hunza villagers cross the Shimshāl Pass in summer to graze their animals and gather salt in the pastures near the upper Shaksgam tributaries and return to

the valleys west of the pass in the fall. Although, occasionally, Chinese patrols came into this area, the practice of seasonal migration continued until the border was closed in 1960.

The announcement in May 1962 that Pakistan and Communist China had agreed to conduct negotiations over their common border in Kashmir was not entirely unexpected; various events since 1959 had indicated that Pakistan was considering such a move. In proposing negotiations between Pakistan and China, Pakistan was motivated not only by a desire to settle a potentially troublesome border problem but also by a desire to embarrass India. The Pakistani announcement called for a provisional delimitation of the border, which was to be renegotiated after the Kashmir dispute was settled. India reacted to the announcement by sending to the governments of both Pakistan and Communist China strongly worded notes stating that because, in the Indian view, all of Jammu and Kashmir is under Indian sovereignty Pakistan has no common frontier with China and that no border agreement, provisional or otherwise, would be recognized.

Prospects for Settlement

Although the territorial claims of China and Pakistan, as shown on pertinent maps, are at variance east of Hunza in the Karakoram Range,

it is probable that an eventual settlement will place the boundary along the crests of this massive mountain range. The Mir of Hunza, however, fears that Pakistani negotiators, in their desire to secure a settlement, may give up part or all of the grazing areas east of the Shimshāl Pass. An agreement between China and Pakistan about the location of their common border would have adverse effects on India in its dispute with China. Because the Pakistani demands apparently are less than the Indian demands, a border settlement on terms more favorable to China than terms that India is willing to grant along its section of the border would weaken India's position that the Kashmir borders are established by tradition and custom. A negotiated settlement between Communist China and Pakistan also would allow China to stress anew a Chinese willingness to settle its border disputes.

Prospects for a settlement of the Sino-Indian dispute in Ladakh are dim because there is virtually no common ground for possible negotiations. At the meeting in 1960, officials of India and Communist China presented detailed evidence to support the claims of their countries. Neither side appears to have established conclusive proof of the validity of its claims, although at the meeting in 1960 India generally presented more detailed and plausible evidence. Emerging from the evidence, however, is the central fact that northeastern Ladakh (including the Pangong-Spanggur area) historically has been an empty, buffer region -- too high

and too barren to attract permanent settlers and of limited value only to a few salt gatherers, hunters, and graziers from adjoining lands who infrequently visited the area.

Militarily, most of northeastern Ladakh is of slight value to India. As far as advantageous terrain is concerned an Indian defense line along the water divide (which corresponds to the 1956 line) appears logical and sound. The barren plateau area with its high desolate basins is of much more significance to China than to India because it is crossed by the strategic road link between Sinkiang and Tibet. The Chinese have now escalated the occasional and relatively minor border clashes to a border war, which reduces still further the dim hopes for an early negotiated settlement of the Ladakh border.

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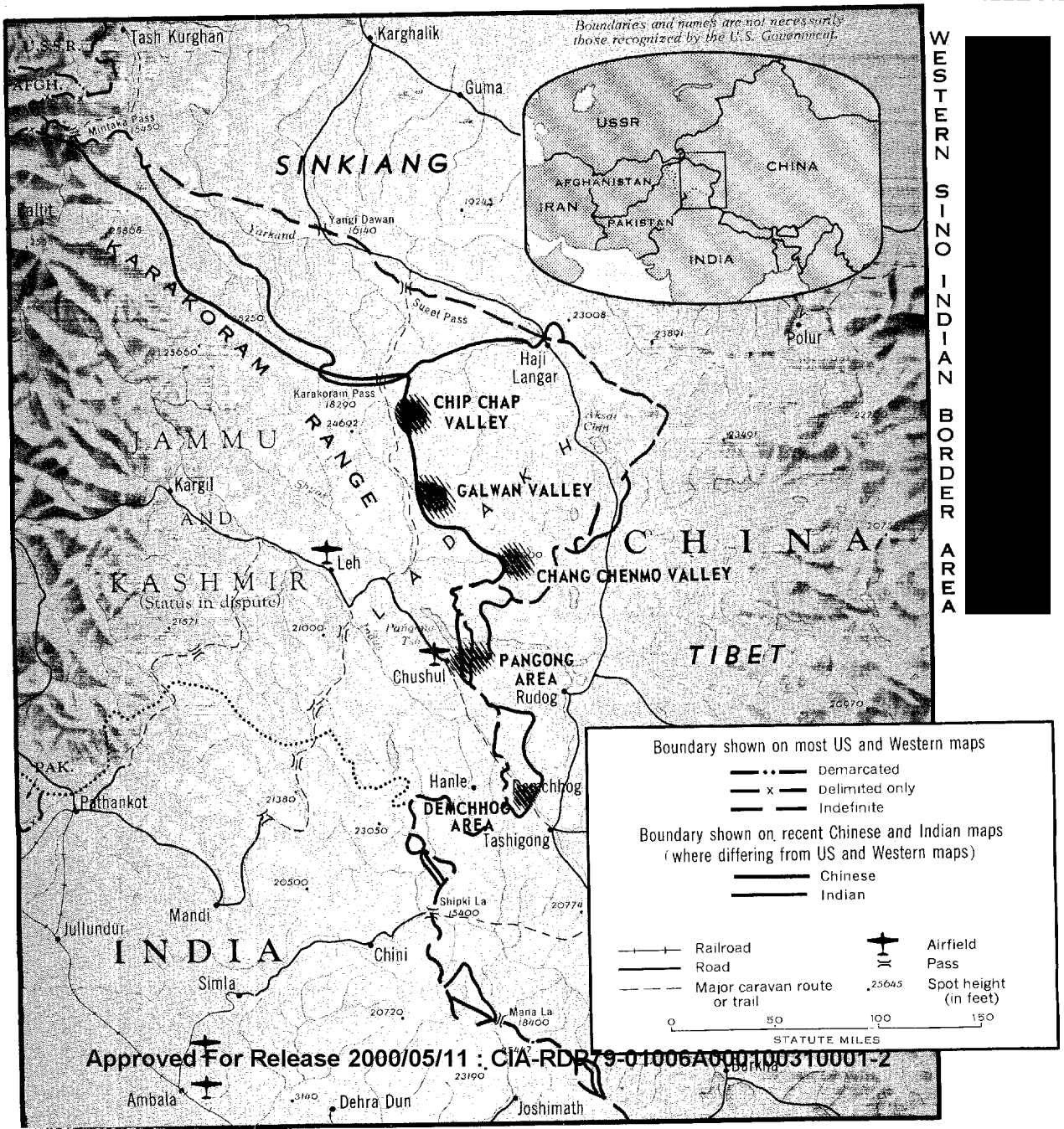

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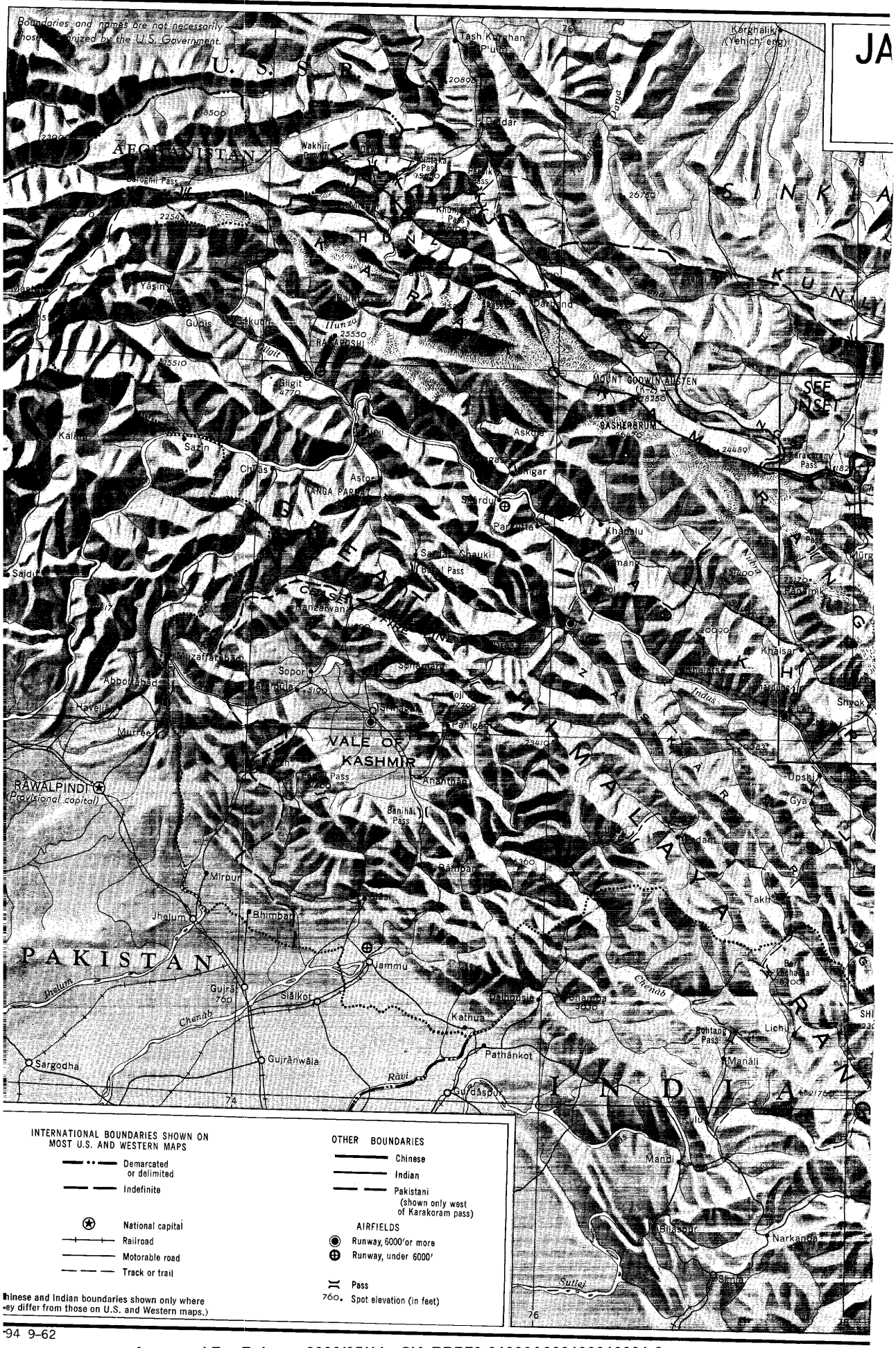

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Transportation: As early as 1957 the Chinese Communists completed a road from Sinkiang through the Aksai Chin Basin to western Tibet. From this road, the Chinese have constructed numerous feeder roads, including one in the west that roughly parallels the main road and permits the movement of troops and supplies to Chinese outposts in the headwater areas of the Chip Chap and Galwān Rivers. Other feeder roads probably have been built in addition to those shown on the accompanying map. In many places the level basins and broad valleys provide natural roadbeds that require little construction or maintenance to be made usable for motor vehicles. Although the Sinkiang-Tibet road is open only 8 months of the year, apparently it has been possible to supply the few thousand troops in western Tibet and the border areas via this route. In addition to the Sinkiang-Tibet road, a road across southern Tibet from the major Chinese bases at Lhasa and Zhikatse that was completed recently also provides logistical support to the Chinese forces in western Tibet. The possible existence of airfields in western Tibet has not been confirmed, but the area probably does have temporary landing strips from which airdrop missions could be carried out.

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Pangong Lake Area. Indian-controlled territory in Ladakh consists chiefly of barren and, in places, rugged mountains and high valleys. The elevation of the valley shown in the photo is about 14,000 feet.

Prospects for a settlement of the Sino-Indian dispute in Ladakh are dim because there is virtually no common ground for possible negotiations. At the meeting in 1960, officials of India and Communist China presented detailed evidence to support the claims of their countries. Neither side appears to have established conclusive proof of the validity of its claims, although at the meeting in 1960 India generally presented more detailed and plausible evidence. Emerging from the evidence, however, is the central fact that northeastern Ladakh (including the Pangong-Spanggur area) historically has been an empty, buffer region -- too high and too barren to attract permanent settlers and of limited value only to a few salt gatherers, hunters, and graziers from adjoining lands who infrequently visited the area.

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Hunza Valley. In the western border area, transportation routes normally are channeled in narrow valleys. In many places in Hunza, tracks are cut into the sides of mountain walls.

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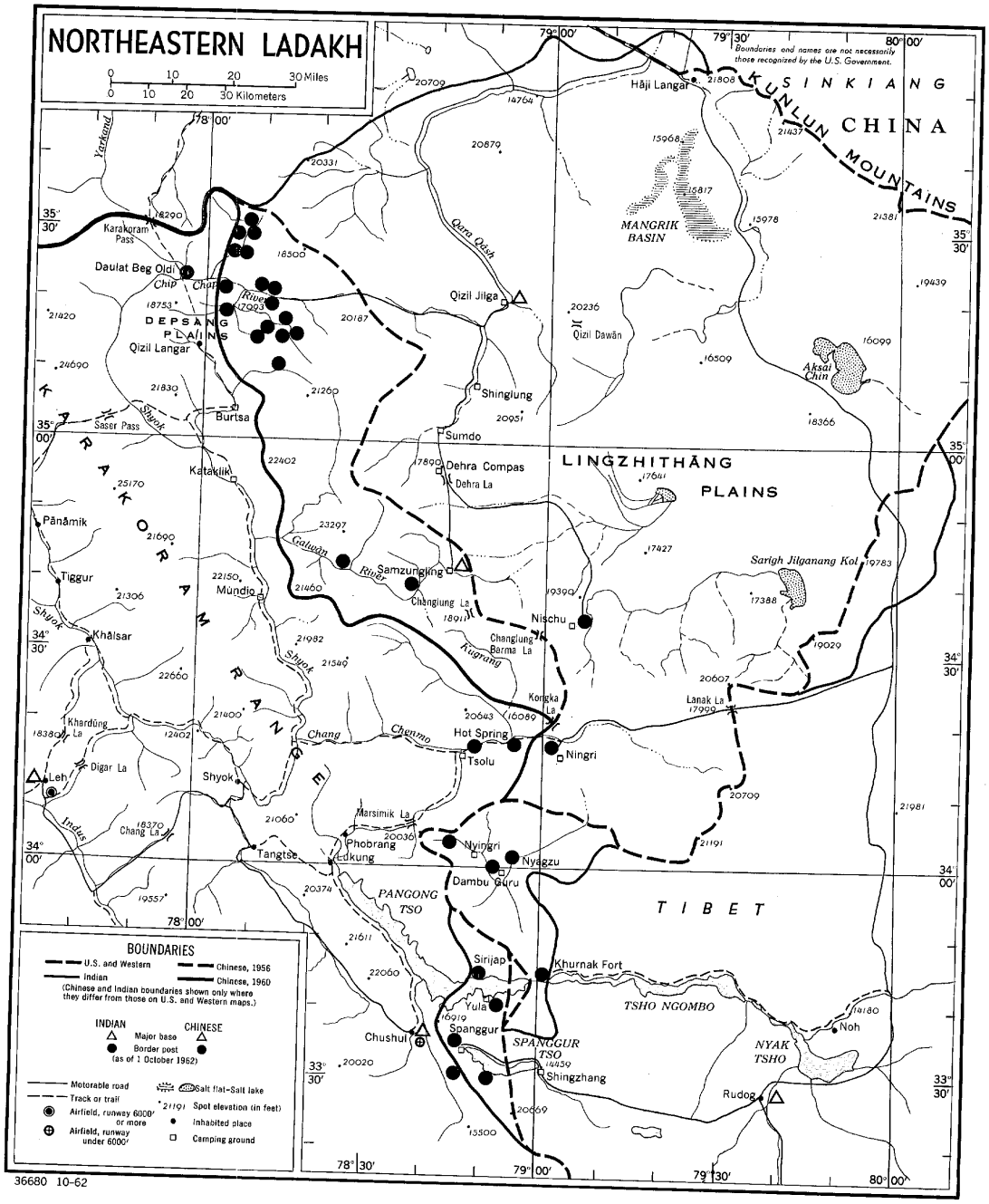


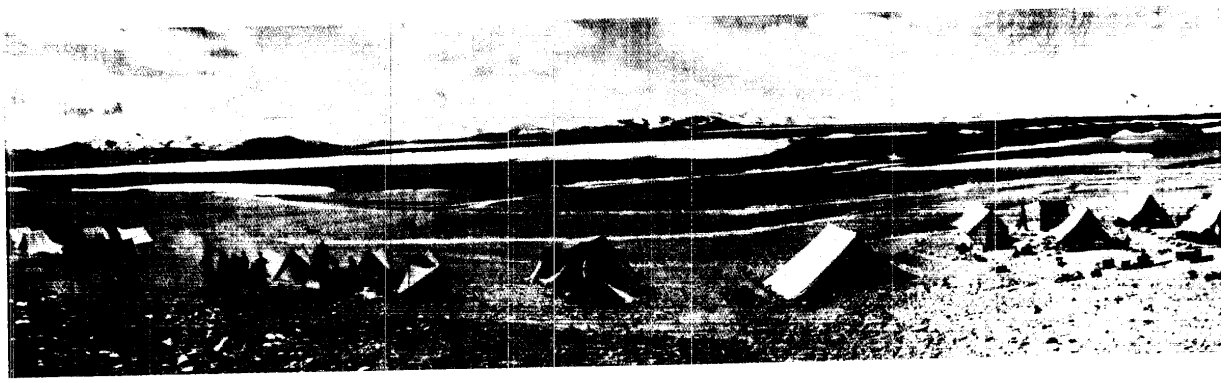
Chinese Cartographic Claims: To India, one of the most irritating and confusing aspects of the Ladakh dispute has been the differing cartographic claims of the Chinese. Two border claims have been depicted on Chinese Communist maps. The earlier claim, which appeared on most Chinese maps published through 1956, was depicted by a boundary to the west along the water divide between the Shyok and Qara Qāsh Rivers. India calls this boundary the 1956 line. The later claim, extending the boundary still farther westward, has been shown on Chinese Communist maps published after 1956. India refers to this boundary as the 1960 line. The 1960 line was given official Chinese sanction when it was shown on the map that the Chinese presented during border talks with the Indians in 1960. The 1960 version of the border was not entirely new, however, inasmuch as it had been shown as early as 1951 on a Chinese Communist map of Tibet. The difference between the two lines is often cited in Indian complaints to China on the border issue. In particular, India refers to a statement by Chou En-lai in 1959 in which he said that the 1956 maps showed the boundary correctly. The Chinese respond by saying that the 1956 and 1960 maps are more or less the same. Although India is justifiably angered by the differing Chinese cartographic claims and the equivocal Chinese statements about them, India itself is not entirely immune to a similar charge of inconsistency. Before 1954, maps produced by India showed various portrayals of the Ladakh boundary. Until that time, apparently, Indian officials had not decided on the precise location of the boundary that has been shown on maps since then and has been described in official Indian documents.

Border Developments in 1962: Between 1959 and 1962, the Chinese slowly enlarged the territory under their control by setting up new outposts and extending roads to supply these posts. This continuing advance beyond the 1956 line and toward the 1960 line posed a potential threat to Indian communications in the Shyok Valley, including access to the Karakoram Pass. Apparently, the Government of India decided early in 1962 to use military means to try to force the withdrawal of Chinese Communist forces from their advanced positions in the Ladakh border area. Indian planning included the dispatch of strengthened patrols into the border area to establish new Indian posts in territory not under Chinese occupation and, in some areas, to outflank and isolate existing Chinese posts in an effort to force the withdrawal of the Chinese. Although the Indians were handicapped by the lack of motorable roads to the frontier, India had sufficient airlift capacity -- augmented by traditional pack-animal transport -- to support logistically the relatively small number of troops that were to be used. Probably the maximum military objective was to make the Chinese retreat to the 1956 line. The Indians may have thought that even if they failed in their main objective, these military actions would halt new Chinese advances and would serve notice to the government in Peking that India was determined not to yield on its Ladakh claims.

The first Chinese reaction to the more aggressive Indian military policy was stated in a Chinese note of April 1962, which charged the Indians with armed reconnaissance and "provocative air-droppings" near a Chinese post in the Chip Chap Valley. This post, located about 10 miles east of the 1960 line, might have been the springboard for further Chinese advances westward in the summer of 1962. During the spring and summer, however, the Indians managed to establish in a rough semicircle a number of posts that effectively blocked Chinese movement along the Chip Chap and its tributaries. Also in 1962, incidents occurred in the Galwān River Valley, where the compartmentalized nature of the terrain restricts lines of communications to the valley floors. In July the Chinese vehemently protested the establishment of an Indian post to the rear (upstream) of a Chinese post in the lower Galwān Valley. The Indian post blocked the only land route between the Chinese supply base reportedly located at Samzungling, to the east, and the frontier area. Additional Chinese forces that were sent to the frontier then severed Indian land communications, presumably through the Kugrang Valley to the south, and thus forced the Indians to supply their forces by airdrop. Nevertheless, the presence of the Indian post or posts deterred temporarily any further Chinese movement down the Galwan Valley.

Indian military operations also have been directed toward a third sector of the frontier -- the Pangong and Spanggur Lake area. Indian activities here have included the establishment of (1) a post east of the Marsimik Pass and west of Chinese posts at Nyagzu and Dambu Guru in order to protect an important route to the Chang Chenmo Valley; (2) posts on both the north and south shores of Pangong, at Sirijap and Yula, respectively, which were intended to prevent the westward movement of Chinese forces along the lake; and (3) a post on high ground that overlooks the Indus Valley and the Chinese posts on the southern and western shores of Spanggur Lake. These Chinese posts, as recent reports of attacks from them testify, threaten the Indian base and airfield at Chushul as well as the overland supply route to Indian troops in the Indus Valley near Demchhog.

By midsummer 1962, Indian forces had advanced about as far as they could go without forcibly dislodging the Chinese from existing Chinese posts. Although a few shooting incidents occurred during this period, most of the military maneuvers were shadow-boxing episodes that involved only a few dozen to a few hundred troops. The Chinese countered Indian moves by strengthening their existing posts and by establishing new positions, many of them in support of older outposts. For a while the military situation was stabilized, but it changed abruptly when the Chinese began new attacks late in October. These recent attacks have resulted in the loss or abandonment of most of the newly established Indian posts, and the Chinese seem to intend to control, at the least, all territory up to the boundary that they claimed in 1960.



Depsang Plains. The tributaries of the upper Chip Chap River flow across the barren Depsang Plains at elevations between 16,500 and 17,600 feet. The terrain here is representative of that of most of the Chinese-controlled part of Ladakh. Border skirmishes have occurred in this area since the spring of 1962.

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